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STATUS REPORT OF FOSSILS ON STAMPS

By Wallace L. Ashby

India issued a stamp commemorating the centenary of the Geological Survey of lndia in 1951. This was the first fossil stamp; it portrays a pair of the Pleistocene elephant *Stegodon ganesa.* Since then more than 140 postal administrations have issued these stamps. According to my checklist, fossil plants and animals are the subject of more than 3,500 face-different stamps (printing variations such as coils, booklets, imperforates, special printings, etc. are omitted from these counts):

	Fossil Specimens	Artists reconstructions	Total
Vertebrates			
Dinosaurs	60	1,956	2,016
Other	145	1,133	1,278
Invertebrates	96	15	111
Plants	47	3	50
Minor, trivial or quasi-fossil	---	65	65
	348	3,172	3,520

The counts in the tabulation exclude artifacts of early man such as tools and cave drawings, post-Ice Age man, fossils fuels, amber jewelry, and recently extinct plants and animals. My checklist includes recent issues not yet listed in Scott's catalogues, some of which may be fraudulent. On the other hand I may have overlooked some legitimate postal issues. Fossils also have been featured on thousands of local post stamps, cachets, cancellations, meters, Cinderella's, etc.

About 11 percent of these stamps depict actual fossil remains, most of which were found in the country issuing the stamp -- skeletons, teeth, mollusk shells, petrified wood, etc. The remaining 89 percent show artist's reconstructions of fossil plants and animals. Dinosaurs, on more than half of the total, are the most popular but all the major classes of animals are well represented. The minor category contains cartoon dinosaurs, dinosaurs watching space ships, Footstones, etc.

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